



Office of the City Council

**2005
Troy City Council
Legislative Address
Marjorie Mahar DerGurahian
President
Thursday, March 3, 2005**

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Mayor Tutunjian, members of the City Council, distinguished guests, and citizens of Troy, as President of the Council, it is my duty to deliver the Council's Legislative Address for 2005.

Last year, I stood before you for the first time and remembered the Troy that was. Tonight, I would like to reflect on the Troy that **is**. Through the cooperative efforts of Mayor Tutunjian, the Council members, city employees and dedicated citizens, we, working with one combined vision, have laid the foundation for growth and change in the City of Troy. Much has been accomplished.

I have noticed more people in attendance at our Council meetings and a more honest exchange of ideas. We have not always agreed but we have made our voices heard. The enemy of government lies, not in opposition to new ideas, but rather in the indifference to them. The citizens of Troy do care. The Mayor cares. This Council cares.

Together, as your elected officials, we have partnered with the Mayor and completed a number of objectives during the last year. Let me be reminiscent:

- The South Troy Riverfront is finally rezoned. This has paved the way to bring new life and environmental responsibility to our waterfront.
- We have set in motion the redevelopment of the Congress/Ferry Street Corridor. This will be a collaborative effort among the City of Troy, Rensselaer County, Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute and the Troy Housing Authority; the result of which will not compete with our already growing downtown, but will serve as an avenue to direct more people to the center of our City.
- Another milestone in the rezoning of Troy will occur tonight. This endeavor is the outcome of hard work and compromise between the planning department, city officials and local neighbors. The future of Hoosick Street will be a place that Troy can be proud of and still maintain the quality of life in its surrounding neighborhood.
- Legislation was unanimously passed which expanded our downtown historic district. This action served to protect the unique architecture of Troy and increase the economic potential for our City.
- Laws were enacted or strengthened to prohibit gathering and loitering around school property, to increase fines for illegal dumping of trash, and to curtail late hours for some convenience stores. Code Enforcement has responded to the Mayor's and the Council's requests to step up enforcement of pre-existing legislation. These efforts are leading to cleaner and safer streets.
- As you know, Public Utilities in Troy has been pretty newsworthy. In response to the devastation of the water main breaks, the Mayor and Council have authorized the purchase of new technology that will help us to identify areas of concern in our City's water transport system before they become bigger issues.

This is not a time to rest. We will strive for:

- More Visible Police Presence

Thanks to the leadership of Councilman Armet, himself a former state policeman, and with support from the entire Council, this issue is always on the table. We will continually stress the importance of "community policing," with more officers walking through our community and talking with the

neighbors. We will support pro-active policing, seek ways to increase our police force and address the public safety needs of our city, ranging from quality of life concerns to education.

- Better and Stronger Code Enforcement

We will support legislation that makes people responsible for their property and for where they live, in other words, we will motivate with consequences. We will look to reestablish the Neighborhood Improvement through Code Enforcement program, better known as NICE, which was initiated by the previous Council. This was a concentrated approach, which used grant funding to identify code violations throughout the Beman Park and Mount Ida neighborhoods and to help owners make necessary improvements. With the help of neighborhood leaders and code officials, this successful program could make a difference in other areas of the city as well. Councilman Mahoney, who brings personal experience as a responsible landlord, is leading our efforts for higher expectations through his Tenant-Landlord Protection and Housing Inspection proposal. Councilman Dunne is requesting that multiple occupancy dwellings contain a registry just inside their front entranceways. This would list the building owner or managers, where and how to find them, and the apartment layout. It would assist our police, firefighters, and code officials if problems or changes occur. With the administration, we will look at these initiatives closely to formulate a workable plan of action.

- Rewarding Home Owners Who Improve and Beautify Their Property

We will seek incentives for owners of owner-occupied single family and owner-occupied two to four-family dwellings who enhance their property. Citizens should not automatically be penalized with severe tax increases for improving their homes and making Troy better. We will look at phase-in strategies, but with expectations that owners stay for at least the duration of the incentive period.

- Supporting Our Colleges' Efforts to Encourage Young People to Come to Troy

Working relationships with our Colleges must continue in order to guide Troy forward. We must seek to bring more entertainment, culture, the arts, and retail to our City, so that in addition to a world class education, students and citizens have more reasons to stay. At the same time, we must educate our Colleges to understand that Troy is larger than just their campuses or their perimeters. Creative projects and urban enhancement partnerships must be considered for all of Troy.

- Smart and Cost-Effective Lighting for our Streets, Parks, and Municipal Buildings

My visits to the RPI Lighting Research Center have led me to Niagara Mohawk, and soon to the New York State Energy Research and Development Authority (NYSERDA). We will pursue projects similar to the solar and LED lighting initiatives begun around the Capital Region and described in recent news articles.

- Improved Parks and Recreational Facilities and Services

Councilman Judge and Councilman Krogh continue their passionate efforts for better parks and recreation for our children and all citizens. Last fall, a comprehensive study of the city's parks was begun and its completion this spring will help us to provide our wish list to the administration. We are active in conversations with our recreation department, the youth associations, sports' leagues, and the golf course facilitators. Last year, we allocated more money for upcoming projects.

- Vital Neighborhoods and Quality of Life Improvement

The Planning Committee, fervently led by Councilwoman Collier, will direct the task of rezoning the entire City, which has been thought about for decades. Protecting and nurturing our neighborhoods, with input from our citizens, will be an integral part of this process. Councilman Wojcik is dedicated to the

beautification and maintenance of our City. His hands-on approach led to the adornment of Lansingburgh parks and boulevards, which will continue in the other districts as well.

- Preserving Our Treasures for Future Generations

This Council aims to restore and preserve our historic treasures. Motivated by the expertise and interest of Councilwoman Messick, we are committed to ensuring that these remain the glory of our history, the legacy of Troy. Take a short drive or walk around any part of the city, and you will see our heritage. We will support stronger legislation to prevent “demolition by neglect,” and we will do what hasn’t been done in a long while, designate more of these treasures as local landmarks; this is our right and this is our duty.

- Facilitating Our Vision for Our Riverfront

The historic Hudson River has been one of the reasons that our City became a center of commerce during the past two centuries. Times have changed; the city is no longer an industrial and manufacturing hub.

However, the river is still our greatest asset. For too long, the benefit of being a riverfront community has been underappreciated, and we have been too willing to allow anything on our shoreline. Now it is time to make possible a vision for our waterfront. Therefore, I am proposing tonight that a “Riverfront Overlay District” be formed for all properties that border the Hudson River. This zoning overlay designation will form a template for smart growth and proper use. As part of this plan, I believe the City should also seek to expand our public space along the Hudson. This would include purchasing waterfront property when possible.

I’m sure many of you here tonight are asking yourselves, “What is different about Troy?” The difference, my friends, is in you. The difference is in the way you see – your neighbors, your elected officials, your City. The difference is in the way you hear and listen to the possibilities. The difference is in the way you speak to each other and how you talk about Troy.

The difference is in the City. Troy has less trash, less snow on the roads, less crime, less neglect, and less apathy. Most notably, Troy has more – more interest, more attention, more respect, more pride, and more hope.

The difference is in your leadership. When I became President of the City Council, I expected a working environment in which we could freely express our diverse opinions and ideas, secure in our right to question how and why. I expected professionalism and respect, not only with each other, but for our City, our citizens, and our employees. I expected that we could value each other’s contributions and that we could genuinely enjoy each other’s company, at least some of the time. I am proud that my expectations have been realized.

Don’t misunderstand, I am keenly aware that we are not without conflict, yet I’ve read that conflict can be an engine that drives an organization forward. We are not frozen by it; we make the best of it. We are moving forward, and that is the point.

My father taught me the importance of public service. I believe that all members of this Council learned it too, from someone very close to them as well. I also believe that most people accept this responsibility and that’s why you are here. Tonight, I challenge each of you to join with this Council and be public servants – and stand up for the possibilities, because Troy is on the move.

Thank you.